

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 AID-20 ACDA-19 NIC-01 CU-04

OMB-01 DRC-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 /171 W

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R 020229Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2683

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1386

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: KOREAN DOMESTIC SCENE

REF: SEOUL 128

SUMMARY: SINCE INSTITUTION OF JANUARY 8 EMERGENCY MEASURES, THE ROKG HAS MOVED ON EVERY FRONT TO ESTABLISH FIRM POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE DOMESTIC SITUATION BEFORE THE OPEING OF THE SPRING UNIVERSITY SEMESTER. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THEY FACE A DIFFICULT POLITICAL PERIOD, ROKG LEADERS INDICATE THEY INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT THAT THE DOMESTIC SITUATION WILL REMAIN WELL IN HAND. HOWEVER THERE REMAINS THE LIKELIHOOD OF SOME LEVEL OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES. WHETHER THIS DEVELOPS INTO A "SPRING CRISIS" DEPENDS ON WHAT HAPPENS ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN MARCH/APRIL AND HOW PRESID- END PARK MANAGES THE SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE THE JANUARY 8 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE EMERGENCY MEASURES, THE ROKG HAS MOVED ON EVERY FRONT TO ESTABLISH CONTROL OF THE ROK DOMESTIC SITUATION BEFORE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL IN EARLY MARCH. THE ROKG HAS USED POLICE COERCION, THE EMERGENCY MEASURES COURTS MARTIAL SYSTEM, PERSUASION AND PROPAGANDA IN ITS

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ALL-OUT EFFORT TO INTIMIDATE AND SILENCE THE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS

WHICH HAD BEEN CHALLENGING IT. THE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS HAVE FOCUSED ON THE UNIVERSITIES, CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS, THE PRESS AND OTHER OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. SINCE INSTITUTION OF THE EMERGENCY MEASURES, A TOTAL OF 15 HAVE BEEN TRIED BEFORE THE COURTS MARTIAL, AND HAVE RECEIVED SENTENCES FROM FIVE TO 15 YEARS. OTHERS ARE TO BE TRIED.

2. THE ROK/CIA AND OTHER POLICE AGENCIES ALSO INSTITUTED HEAVY, OBVIOUS SURVEILLANCE OF SOME INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL OPPONENTS. THE PURPOSE OF SURVEILLANCE HAS BEEN TO INTIMIDATE CHRISTIAN AND OTHER LEADERS INVOLVED IN PRE-JANUARY 8 ACTIVITIES WHO REMAIN UNDER HEAVY GOVERNMENT PRESSURE TO ABSTAIN FROM ANY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIONS.

3. AS FOR THE MEDIA, THE JAN 8 EMERGENCY MEASURES HAVE IN FACT SO FAR EFFECTIVELY SUPPRESSED PRESS DISSENT. NEWSPAPERS, SO FAR AT LEAST, HAVE NOT CHALLENGED THE GOVERNMENT'S STRICTURES AND IN

THE CASE OF NORTH KOREAN ANTI-PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, HAVE ACCEPTED EXPLICIT GOVERNMENT DIRECTION ON NEWS HANDLING.

4. THE ROKG HAS ALSO RESORTED TO HEIGHTENING PUBLIC CONCERN OVER THE MILITARY THREAT FROM THE NORTH THROUGH A MAJOR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. IN PART, THE CAMPAIGN IS A REACTION TO THE INTENSIFICATION OF NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE SOUTH, AND THE REALIZATION THAT THE NORTH IS NOT INTERESTED IN PROGRESS IN THE SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE AS LONG AS IT BELIEVES THAT ROKG FACES MAJOR INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE MAJOR ELEMENT OF THE ROKG HANDLING OF THE NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN ITS IMPACT IN TERMS DOMESTIC SITUATION. IN THAT CONTEXT, MAJOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE VIEWED THE FEB 15 FISHING BOAT INCIDENT AS A PROPAGANDA WINDFALL WHICH THEY ARE TRYING TO EXPLOIT TO THE FULLEST.

5. FURTHER, IN THE JANUARY - FEBRUARY PERIOD THE POLICE AGENCIES, LEAD BY THE ROK/CIA IDENTIFIED THOSE WHO HAD LED OR JOINED IN ANY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES OR IN OTHER PROTEST MOVEMENTS. ON A SYSTEMATIC BASIS, THOSE SO IDENTIFIED HAVE BEEN INTERROGATED OR APPROACHED IN OTHER WAYS BY INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES. THE PURPOSE OF THESE APPROACHES HAS BEEN TO SECURE BY COERCION OR PERSUASION AGREEMENT TO DESIST FROM ANTI-YUSHIN ACTION. (THESE INTERROGATIONS HAVE USUALLY BEEN CONDUCTED WITHOUT RESORT TO THE TRADITIONAL ROK/

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CIA TORTURE METHODS.) WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE POLICE AGENCIES HAVE HELD QUIETLY A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS AND OTHERS WHO, WHILE NOT VIOLATING THE EMERGENCY MEASURES, HAVE REFUSED TO PROMISE TO DESIST FROM FUTURE ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES.

6. WITH REGARD TO THE UNIVERSITIES, THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH HAS BEEN EMPHATIC. IT HAS STRESSED THAT IT WILL DEAL FIRMLY WITH ANY STUDENT DISORDERS AND PRESIDENT APRK HIMSELF HAS THREATENED TO

DISSOLVE ANY SCHOOL WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS GET OUT OF HAND. THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLICE AGENCIES CONTINUE TO PUT HEAVY PRESSURES ON UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS AND FACULTY, PUTTING RESPONSIBILITY ON THEM FOR KEEPING THE STUDENTS IN LINE. FURTHER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED THAT THERE WILL BE NO CLEMENCY SHOWN STUDENTS INVOLVED IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HESITATE TO USE FORCE IN DEALING WITH ANY STUDENT CHALLENGE.

7 THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE SPRING PERIOD INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- A. EARLY AND QUICK CLOSURES OF ANY OF THE MAJOR UNIVERSITIES IF STUDENT DISORDERS GET OUT OF HAND; AND
 - B. THE STRENGTHENING OF POLICE ABILITY TO CONTROL STUDENT AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. (AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE ROKG HAS MOVED THROUGH COMMERCIAL CHANNELS TO PURCHASE BOTH ARMORED CARS AND SUBSTANTIATION RIOT CONTROL GAS STOCKS.)
- WE HAVE REPORTS THAT POLICE AND SELECTED MILITARY UNITS ARE WORKING ON CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR CROWD CONTROL AND WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION, WE BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINGENCY PLANNING INVOLVES CLOSURES OF ALL UNIVERSITIES AND THE IMPOSITION OF SOME FORM OF MARTIAL LAW IF REQUIRED.

8. THE GOVERNMENT HAS HANDLED THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN A SIMPLE FASHION. IT HAS REFUSED TO CONVENE THE ASSEMBLY AND THE NDP AND ITS LSSS PLIABLE MEMBERS ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO CALCULATED HARASSMENT TO IMPRESS ON THEM THE VERY SHORT TETHER EVEN THE TAME OPPOSITION IS ALLOWED. THIS HAS BEEN RESENTED AND THERE ARE MURMURINGS OF UNHAPPINESS IN THE NDP. HOWEVER, THE PARTY CONTINUES TO WAIT ON EVENTS, NOT ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE THEM.

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

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9. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE THE PRIME MINISTER HAS ATTEMPTED TO RE-ESTABLISH "DIALOGUE" PARTICULARLY WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. ROKG HAS ALSO LAUNCHED A CORRUPTION DRIVE WHICH HAS LEAD TO THE DISMISSAL OF 331 MIDDLE-LEVEL AND SENIOR-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AS WELL AS 296 EMPLOYEES OF STATE ENTERPRISES. THESE MOVES HAVE HAD ONLY LIMITED EFFECT. IN VIEW OF THE EMERGENCY MEASURES, THE PRIME MINISTER'S EFFORTS AT DIALOGUE HAVE NECESSARILY INVOLVED AN ATTEMPT TO SECURE ACCEPTANCE OF THE INEVITABILITY OF PRESIDENT PARK'S CONTINUATION I POWER AND THE YUSHIN SYSTEM AS IT IS. PUBLIC IMPACT OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN BLUNTED BY THE FACT THAT THE CAMPAIGN, AT LEAST TO DATE, HAS ONLY INVOLVED OFFICIALS AND HAS NOT REACHED INTO THE HIGHEST POLITICAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

10 IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR ROKG OFFICIALS THEY CONFIRM THAT THEY FACE A DIFFICULT POLITICAL SITUATION. HOWEVER, IN PAST WEEKS, ROKG LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED INCREASING CONFIDENCE THAT THE MEASURES DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL ASSURE THAT THE SITUATION DOES NOT GET OUT OF HAND. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY HOPEFUL THAT THE FEBRUARY 15 FISHING BOAT INCIDENT AND HEAVY PUBLICITY GIVEN NORTH KOREAN MILITARY THREAT WILL HAVE MAJOR DAMPENING EFFECT ON PUBLIC MOOD. IT IS ROKG ASSESSMENT THAT THERE WILL BE SOME LEVEL OF DISSENT AND ANTI-GOV-SECRET

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ERNMENT ACTIVITY, BUT NOT OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS. ROKG LAYS PARTICULAR STRESS ON THE POINT THAT POLICE AGENCIES HAVE IDENTIFIED, AND IN MANY CASES, THEY BELIEVE, ALREADY NEUTRALIZED, LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS AMONG STUDENTS, CHRISTIANS AND OTHERS. AS A CONSEQUENCE, GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE ON THE EVE OF THE OPENING OF THE SCHOOLS IS ONE OF DETERMINATION TO RIDE OUT ANY DIFFICULTIES WHICH EMERGE AND A BELIEF THAT THE PRESENT FIRM GOVERNMENT STANCE WILL DETER MAJOR STUDENT OUTBREAKS. ROKG LEADERS ALSO BELIEVE THAT THEIR CONTINGENCY PLANNING WILL ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE QUICKLY TO ESTABLISH CONTROL IN THE EVENT THE STUDENT SITUATION DOES BECOME MORE UNRULY THAN THEY NOW EXPECT.

11. DESPITE APPARENT GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE IN ITS ABILITY TO CONTROL THE DOMESTIC SITUATION, PARK'S GOVERNMENT DOES FACE A PERIOD OF MAJOR POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY. THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS HAVE BEEN ESSENTIALLY DIRECTED TO SUPPRESSION AND COERCION OF CRITICS AND TO EXPLOITATION OF NORTH KOREAN THREAT.

AS A CONSEQUENCE, THERE STILL REMAINS ALL OF THE ELEMENTS OF DISSENT AND PUBLIC CONCERN OVER THE PARK GOVERNMENT'S MANNER OF RULE WHICH LED FIRST TO THE FALL PROTESTS AND TO THE EVENTUAL IMPOSITION OF THE EMERGENCY MEASURES. MAJOR PRICE RISES AND SOME GOVERNMENT CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF LABOR UNREST COUPLED WITH STUDENT/CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES ARE ADDITIONAL NEGATIVE FACTORS IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL EQUATION. PARK'S MORE EXTREME OPPONENTS REMAIN AS CONVINCED AS BEFORE THAT PARK SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM POWER. PARK KNOWS THIS AND HAS NO INTENTION OF SUCCUMBING TO THEIR PRESSURE.

12. IN THE PRESENT SITUATION THERE ARE NO CLEAR SIGNALS AS TO WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE SPRING PERIOD, AND THERE WILL NOT BE UNTIL SCHOOLS OPEN AND GENERAL STUDENT MOOD CAN BE ASSESSED. WHETHER THE MASS OF STUDENTS ARE READY TO DIRECTLY CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT KNOWN. MOST LIKELY INITIAL SCENARIO WITH REGARD TO THE UNIVERSITIES SEEMS TO BE IN THE INITIAL PERIOD AFTER THE SCHOOLS OPEN, STUDENT ACTIVISTS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS WILL BE CAUTIOUS AND ATTEMPT ONLY LOW-LEVEL OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES TO TEST THE ATMOSPHERE. THEIR EXPECTATIONS WOULD BE THAT EITHER THROUGH GOVERNMENT MISHANDLING, THROUGH RELAXATION OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL OR SIMPLY THROUGH GRADUAL ESCALATION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES THERE WILL BE LATER OPPORTUNITY TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR MAJOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT CHALLENGES AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES.

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13. OTHER GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS APPEAR TO BE AWAITING RESUMPTION OF SCHOOL AND HOPING FOR STUDENT UNREST BEFORE ATTEMPTING ANY MOVES ON THEIR OWN. WE HAVE INDICATION OF ATTEMPT BY AT LEAST ONE GROUP TO ISSUE ANTI-GOVERNMENT STATEMENT IN SPRING PERIOD. THERE ARE ALSO EFFORTS UNDERWAY TO USE ANTI-JAPANESE THEMES TO MOUNT PROTESTS WHILE EVADING EMERGENCY MEASURE RESTRICTIONS.

14. AT THIS POINT, WE CANNOT PREDICT WHAT COURSE OF EVENTS WILL BE OVER NEXT MONTHS. IT MAY BE THAT MAJOR GOVERNMENT REPRESSIVE ACTIONS WILL SUCCEED IN COWING WOULD-BE OPPONENTS INTO CONTINUED SILENCE. FEBRUARY 15 FISHING BOAT INCIDENT HAS CLEARLY HAD A SIGNIFICANT DAMPENING EFFECT AND ANY FURTHER INCREASES IN TENSIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH WOULD FURTHER DIVERT PUBLIC CONCERN. HOWEVER, THE STEPS ROKG HAS ALREADY TAKEN ARE THE BEST MEASURE OF ITS OWN CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION.

15. THE PARK GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY RESTS IN LARGE PART ON AN IMPOSING ARRAY OF ARBITRARY POWER. THE GOVERNMENT IS UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ON THAT SCORE. THIS MAY WELL BE SUFFICIENT TO KEEP THE LID ON THE DOMESTIC SITUATION FOR THE PRESENT. HOWEVER, THE ROK DOMESTIC SITUATION DOES REMAIN VOLATILE AND THERE IS THE PROSPECT OF SOME LEVEL OF UNREST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT AGITATION. WHETHER THIS DEVELOPS INTO A MAJOR "SPRING CRISIS" WILL DEPEND ON THE COURSE OF

EVENTS ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN THE NEXT MONTHS AND PRESIDENT
PARK'S HANDLING OF THE SITUATION.
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